

Report of the Director of Public Health to the meeting of Wellbeing Board to be held on 28th February 2023

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Subject:

Update on the Child Friendly District initiative

Summary statement:

This paper provides an update on the Child Friendly District initiative and requests the approval of the board on the future naming convention and ongoing focus of the work

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

The initiative contributes to two of the four equalities themes as set out in the Equality Objectives and Equalities Plan 2021-25.

Specifically, it will help strengthen our collective approach to the equalities theme of **Community**; creating a district where more children and young people will feel that they **'belong, are understood, feel safe and are able to fully participate and contribute to the social and civic life of the district'**

In addition, a focus on children's rights and voice and influence contributes to the equalities theme of **Service Design**. Strengthening our approach to voice and influence will help us to **'ensure our services are designed in an inclusive and accessible way including co-production with local people'**

Equality and diversity considerations have been regarded throughout this paper

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children's

1. SUMMARY

- Our foundational year working with UNICEF UK on the Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme concluded in December 2022. We are now applying the learning and development to continue our approach to embedding children's rights and to give children and young people more voice and influence over local services. Our ambition to create a more child friendly District underpins the new partnership Children and Young People's Strategy.

The Wellbeing Board is being asked to support a proposed new naming convention that reflects a localised approach and that differentiates us from the international UNICEF Child Friendly Cities programme.

We are also providing this update to update the Board on the recent, current and planned activities that will fall under the remit of the initiative - with a focus on the voice and influence of children and young people as a means of improving services and outcomes.

2. BACKGROUND

What is Child Friendly Cities?

Child Friendly Cities is a UNICEF Children's Rights framework for Local Government that is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified in the UK in 1991.

"The programme aims to create cities and communities where all children whether they are living in care, using a children's centre, or simply visiting their local library have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives."

UNICEF UK

It is important to note that some Local Authorities such as Warwickshire and Leeds also use 'child friendly' terminology but are not working in partnership with UNICEF, instead delivering their own local approaches to embedding children's rights.

The local timeline and context

A report was taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 28th January 2020 setting out our intention to work with UNICEF UK to become a part of their Child Friendly Cities and Communities programme. The report requested the support of the Board to pursue the initiative and the recommendations from the report were agreed in the meeting.

A programme lead for Child Friendly Programme was appointed in June 2021 and a partnership was developed with UNICEF UK. It was agreed that as we were during a period of organisational change, we would work with UNICEF UK to complete their Foundational Year before tacking a judgement on whether to proceed with the full 3-to-5-year programme

Our Foundation Year began in December 2021 and over the following months over

100 local stakeholders attended Children's Rights training and a "Child Rights Coalition" was established to shape the initiative. In May 2022 the Programme Lead left the post, recruitment took place in June with their successor starting in October 2022.

In the period between, the initiative was sustained by the Director of Public Health and the Children and Young People's Public Health Team who continued to work with UNICEF UK to meet the key mandated milestones within the Foundational Year. In December 2022, an evaluation meeting was held with UNICEF to assess our progress to date and to decide whether to continue with the full accredited programme.

At the review meeting UNICEF UK shared that; "Bradford Council is making good progress along the prescribed Child Friendly Cities journey" and that we "have shown a demonstrable and sustained commitment from senior leadership" with "support from across the council".

To build on this progress it was decided that Bradford District would adopt the approach taken by other Local Authorities such as 'Child Friendly Warwickshire' and 'Child Friendly Leeds' and continue working to embed the voice of children and young people - inspired by but not working within the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities Framework. This enables us to adopt an approach that works best for our local context and to be more pragmatic in terms of increasing the voice and influence of children and young people in the district as part of our wider improvement journey.

Our investment in a Foundational Year with UNICEF enabled us to bring together a local partnership of stakeholders ("The Child Rights Coalition"), provide Children's Rights training to nominated Child Rights Champions, provide Children's Rights training to over 100 wider stakeholders, conduct a Children's Rights Situational Analysis with 164 responses, recruit 'Child Right's Apprentices' within the Youth Service and to deliver a Discovery Day Launch Event on 23rd November 2022 at Valley Parade..

Over the Foundational Year and through a range of consultation activities our new 'child friendly' Children and Young People's Plan has been informed by the views of children and young people and the organisations who support them. We will continue to involve and work with children and young people on the next stages of the plan.

A competition to design a logo for the initiative was run with local primary schools and the finalists' entries were exhibited at the Discovery Day event. Children in attendance voted for their favourite entry with the winning design being from a Year Three child from St John's Primary School in Holmewood. The Council communications team have been working to turn the winning design into a digital logo and the Child Friendly team have been out to visit the school to meet the winner, with her school council invited to City Hall to take part in a local democracy workshop.

Our commitment to children and young people's voice and influence

As well as undertaking the UNICEF Foundational Year, we have an ongoing collective commitment to children and young people's voice and influence:

- In the **Council Plan 2021-25** under Good Start/Great Schools we state that *"the voice of the child is at the heart of all we do"*
- One of the three core values in the new draft **Children and Young People's Plan** is *"The Voice and Influence of Children, Young People and Families"*
- The Terms of Reference for the **Children, Young People and Families Executive Board** states that *"Ensuring the views and needs of children, young people and their families are sought and listened to is a core value"*
- The Terms of Reference for the **Children, Young People and Families Health and Care Partnership Board** states one of the Working Principles as *"Co-production with children and families should be at the heart of our work and our approach"* and a Core Purpose of the Board is stated as *"To ensure that the voice of children, young people and families is at the heart of informing the actions this board should take."*

Improving our approaches to children and young people's voice and influence has been identified as an area of improvement by inspectors in recent years:

- The September 2021 Ofsted monitoring visit highlighted our need to *"strengthen the participation and the voice and influence of children and young people"*
- The June 2022 Joint Area SEND Inspection stated that *"Leaders do not gather the voice of children and young people with SEND as much as they need to"*
- The November 2022 Ofsted inspection stated that *"Children's voice...is a relatively new development and is yet to have an impact on the quality of services"*

The networks and partnerships developed under the Child Friendly initiative will be an enabler to help address these areas of improvement.

Local assets

In Bradford District we have an abundance of local assets upon which we will build to become a more Child Friendly district:

- Large population of children and young people – the youngest in the UK,
- Commitment at senior leadership level, as evidenced by the inclusion of children's voice and coproduction as outlined in the strategies and policies above
- A new Children and Young People's Plan with 'voice and influence' as a key enabler across all four priority areas
- Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Council
- Social Care Participation Coordinator and Participation Officer posts
- Parent and Carers forums

- Involvement and Communications Team within the Bradford District & Craven Health and Care Partnership
- Born in Bradford & Age of Wonder
- WY Police Youth Information and Advisory Group
- Youth Justice Service Youth Engagement Group
- BDC NHS Foundation Trust Youth Involvement Group “Young Dynamos”
- BDC NHS Foundation Trust CaMHS Involvement Group
- Bradford Citizens
- Alliance for Life Chances
- The Linking Network
- Youth Service Young Ambassadors
- Young Lives Bradford
- Baildon Youth Council
- Keighley Youth Forum
- School Councils
- Healthy Minds and Youth in Mind
- City of Culture 2025

Post UNICEF naming convention

The specific terminology “Child Friendly Cities” is used by UNICEF as a denotation of Local Authorities working in paid partnership with them - or those who have already achieved Child Friendly status. Now we have completed our Foundational Year it is therefore necessary that we adopt a new wording to better describe our local ambitions as a partnership within the district.

In keeping with the naming convention adopted by other Local Authority Partnerships who are inspired by but not working within the UNICEF Framework, such as ‘Child Friendly Warwickshire’ and “Child Friendly Leeds”, we are proposing using “**Child Friendly Bradford District**’ as an inclusive way to denote the initiative and the umbrella of activities that may come to be associated with it. This suggestion is formed based on discussions with various stakeholders.

Child Friendly Bradford District forward plan

The forward plan for Child Friendly Bradford District is guided by the new (currently draft) Children and Young People’s Strategy. As a partnership we will work together to improve outcomes by focusing on the four priority areas of:

- Physical and Mental Health
- Safe homes, places and communities
- Education
- Skills

One of the key enablers written into the strategy that will help us improve outcomes across all these priorities is “the voice and influence of children and young people” and Child Friendly Bradford District will play an unlocking role in this by:

>Establishing a “Community of Practice” network for those who have youth voice and participation within their job roles.

>Developing a network of school councils from across the district, offering voice and influence opportunities to the learners and CPD opportunities to school staff. Schools have been contacted with 34 schools signed up. A Child Friendly “Pupil Voice” portal has been established on the Bradford Schools Online website

>Collating shared resources to enable the partnership to involve children and young people more consistently, efficiently and effectively. For example, shared approaches, toolkits and guidance around involving children and young people in the recruitment of staff or in the commissioning of services.

>Exploring the development of a more centralised Youth Voice structure to enable children and young people from across the district to come together to meet and work together with decision makers.

>Developing a partnership-based Voice, Influence and Change Strategy for the district that details how our organisations will enable children and young people to have a voice and influence.

>Delivering a series of workshops and events to enable children and young people to help us create youth-led action plans relating to the priorities identified in the Children and Young People’s Plan; *how* will we improve outcomes, what does good look like, what role can services play, what role can children and young people play?

>Providing training and development opportunities to elected members, senior leaders and the wider workforce on children’s rights and voice and influence

>Providing project-based support to increase the voice and influence of Children in Care and Care Leavers

>Providing project-based support to increase the voice and influence of children and young people with SEND

In addition to the work around improving our approach to children and young people’s voice and influence, under the Child Friendly District initiative we will also:

>Gather regular good news stories relating to children and young people and working with the Council’s Press Office to create press releases for the local media

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

With the ongoing establishment of the Children’s Trust and the changes and reconfigurations taking place around this, we are intending to take a phased approach to rolling out Child Friendly Bradford District as a wider brand and further reference is included in the ‘risk management’ section below. The Child Friendly Programme Lead has been meeting with colleagues involved in the establishment of the Trust to ensure they are included in the future planning for Child Friendly.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

The operational budget for the Child Friendly District initiative has been committed and allocated for five years from FY 2020/21. The budget is made up from a central contribution from the Local Authority with additional funding provided by the Health and Care Partnership. Budget savings have already been identified for the initiative.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The Child Friendly Bradford District initiative is governed through a stakeholder steering group that meets on a six-weekly basis. The Wellbeing Board provides overall Governance and through the Children and Families Executive Board we will ensure that our Child Friendly ambitions are aligned with our partnership approach to delivering on the new Children and Young People's Strategy.

The Board is also asked to consider any reputational risk in using "Child Friendly" as an overtly public facing brand whilst we are in a period of service improvement and reconfiguration.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

➤ None arising

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

➤ None arising

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

➤ None arising

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

The new Children and Young Peoples Strategy will form the basis of our partnership approach to improving outcomes for children and young people and helping us become a more Child Friendly District. One of the 4 priority areas within the strategy is "Safe homes, places and communities". "Feeling Safe" has been highlighted in the 2022 Localities Survey as a top issue for children and young people.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The values and ethos of the Child Friendly initiative are built on embedding Children's Rights in public services

7.5 TRADE UNION

None arising

7.6.1 WARD IMPLICATIONS

Elements of the initiative may relate to Ward levels, primarily where children and young people are encouraged to have a greater understanding of an engagement with local government functions with the potential to take part in workshops with local councillors.

7.7 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)

None arising.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

The September 2021 Ofsted Monitoring Visit highlighted our need to “*strengthen the participation and the voice and influence of children and young people*”. Specific capacity within the Child Friendly initiative will be given to strengthening the voice and influence functions for children in care and care leavers and our approach to Corporate Parenting.

The Child Friendly initiative will also work in partnership with our Fostering Teams to support their work, including for Fostering Fortnight taking place this May and future work to be developed around Fostering Friendly employers.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

None arising

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the naming convention of ‘Child Friendly Bradford District’ is adopted for our local Child Friendly initiative
- The primary focus of Child Friendly Bradford District is coordinating and developing our partnership approaches to giving children and young people more influence over public services in the district.

11. APPENDICES

None provided

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

➤ None provided